A PROJECT FOR THE Advancement of Religion, AND THE *Reformation of Manners.*

By a Perſon of QUALITY.

O quiſquis volet impias
Cædes, & rabiem tollere civicam:
Si quæret pater urbium
Subſcribi ſtatuis, indomitam audeat
Refrænare licentiam.

Hor.

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A PROJECT FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF RELIGION AND THE REFORMATION OF MANNERS.

TO THE COUNTESS OF BERKELEY.[1]

MADAM,

MY intention in prefixing your Ladyship's name, is not after the common form, to desire your protection of the following papers; which I take to be a very unreasonable request; since, by being inscribed to your Ladyship, though without your knowledge, and from a concealed hand, you cannot recommend them without some suspicion of partiality. My real design is, I confess, the very same I have often detested in most dedications; that of publishing your praises to the world. Not upon the subject of your noble birth, for I know others as noble; or of the greatness of your fortune, for I know others far greater; or of that beautiful race (the images of their parents) which call you mother: for even this may perhaps have been equalled in some other age or country. Besides, none of these advantages do derive any accomplishments to the owners, but serve at best only to adorn what they really possess. What I intend, is your piety, truth, good sense, and good nature, affability, and charity; wherein I wish your Ladyship had many equals, or any superiors; and I wish I could say I knew them too, for then your Ladyship might have had a chance to escape this address. In the meantime, I think it highly necessary, for the interest of virtue and religion, that the whole kingdom should be informed in some parts of

[1] This is the same Countess of Berkeley whom Swift hoaxed with his "Meditation on a Broomstick." She was the daughter of Viscount Campden and sister to the Earl of Gainsborough. [T. S.]

your character: For instance, that the easiest and politest conversation, joined with the truest piety, may be observed in your Ladyship, in as great perfection, as they were ever seen apart in any other persons. That by your prudence and management under several disadvantages, you have preserved the lustre of that most noble family into which you are grafted, and which the unmeasurable profusion of ancestors for many generations had too much eclipsed. Then, how happily you perform every office of life to which Providence has called you: In the education of those two incomparable daughters, whose conduct is so universally admired; in every duty of a prudent, complying, affectionate wife; in that care which descends to the meanest of your domestics; and, lastly, in that endless bounty to the poor, and discretion where to distribute it. I insist on my opinion, that it is of importance for the public to know this and a great deal more of your Ladyship; yet whoever goes about to inform them, shall instead of finding credit, perhaps be censured for a flatterer. To avoid so usual a reproach, I declare this to be no dedication, but properly an introduction to a proposal for the advancement of religion and morals, by tracing, however imperfectly, some few lineaments in the character of a Lady, who hath spent all her life in the practice and promotion of both.

Among all the schemes offered to the public in this projecting age, I have observed with some displeasure, that there have never been any for the improvement of religion and morals; which beside the piety of the design from the consequence of such a reformation in a future life, would be the best natural means for advancing the public felicity of the state, as well as the present happiness of every individual. For, as much as faith and morality are declined among us, I am altogether confident, they might in a short time, and with no very great trouble, be raised to as high a perfection as numbers are capable of receiving. Indeed, the method is so easy and obvious, and some present opportunities so good, that, in order to have this project reduced to practice, there seems to want nothing more than to put those in mind, who by their honour, duty, and interest, are chiefly concerned.

But because it is idle to propose remedies before we are assured of the disease, or to be in pain,[1] till we are convinced of the danger; I shall first shew in general, that the nation is extremely corrupted in religion and morals; and then I will offer a short scheme for the reformation of both.

As to the first; I know it is reckoned but a form of speech, when divines complain of the wickedness of the age: However, I believe, upon a fair comparison with other times and countries, it would be found an undoubted truth.

For, first; to deliver nothing but plain matter of fact without exaggeration or satire; I suppose it will be granted, that hardly one in a hundred among our people of quality or gentry, appears to act by any principle of religion; that great numbers of them do entirely discard it, and are ready to own their disbelief of all revelation in ordinary discourse. Nor is the case much better among the vulgar, especially in great towns where the profaneness and ignorance of handicraftsmen, small traders, servants, and the like, are to a degree very hard to be imagined greater. Then, it is observed abroad, that no race of mortals hath so little sense of religion, as the English soldiers; to confirm which, I have been often told by great officers in the army, that in the whole compass of their acquaintance, they could not recollect three of their profession, who seemed to regard or believe one syllable of the Gospel: And the same, at least, may be affirmed of the fleet. The consequences of all which upon the actions of men are equally manifest. They never go about, as in former time, to hide or palliate their vices, but expose them freely to view, like any other common occurrences of life, without the least reproach from the world, or themselves. For instance; any man will tell you he intends to be drunk this evening, or was so last night, with as little ceremony or scruple, as he would tell you the time of the day. He will let you know he is going to a whore, or that he has got a clap, with as much indifferency, as he would a piece of public news. He will swear, curse, or blaspheme, without the least passion or provocation. And, though all regard for reputation is not quite laid aside in the other sex,

[1] Scott follows Faulkner in using the word "fear." The reading in the text is that of the first edition, the "Miscellanies" (1711), and of Hawkesworth. [T. S.]

'tis, however, at so low an ebb, that very few among them seem to think virtue and conduct of absolute necessity for preserving it. If this be not so, how comes it to pass, that women of tainted reputations find the same countenance and reception in all public places, with those of the nicest virtue, who pay, and receive visits from them without any manner of scruple? which proceeding, as it is not very old among us, so I take it to be of most pernicious consequence: It looks like a sort of compounding between virtue and vice, as if a woman were allowed to be vicious, provided she be not a profligate; as if there were a certain point, where gallantry ends, and infamy begins, or that a hundred criminal amours were not as pardonable as half a score.

Besides those corruptions already mentioned, it would be endless to enumerate such as arise from the excess of play or gaming: The cheats, the quarrels, the oaths and blasphemies among the men; among the women, the neglect of household affairs, the unlimited freedoms, the indecent passion; and lastly, the known inlet to all lewdness, when after an ill run, the person must answer the defects of the purse; the rule on such occasions holding true in play as it does in law; *quod non habet in crumena, luat in corpore.*

But all these are trifles in comparison, if we step into other scenes, and consider the fraud and cozenage of trading men and shopkeepers; that insatiable gulf of injustice and oppression, the law. The open traffic for all civil and military employments, (I wish it rested there) without the least regard to merit or qualifications; the corrupt management of men in office; the many detestable abuses in choosing those who represent the people, with the management of interest and factions among the representatives. To which I must be bold to add, the ignorance of some of the lower clergy; the mean servile temper of others; the pert pragmatical demeanour of several young stagers in divinity, upon their first producing themselves into the world; with many other circumstances, needless, or rather invidious, to mention; which falling in with the corruptions already related, have, however unjustly, almost rendered the whole order contemptible.

This is a short view of the general depravities among us, without entering into particulars, which would be an endless

labour. Now, as universal and deep-rooted as these appear to be, I am utterly deceived, if an effectual remedy might not be applied to most of them; neither am I at present upon a wild speculative project, but such a one as may be easily put in execution.

For, while the prerogative of giving all employments continues in the Crown, either immediately, or by subordination; it is in the power of the Prince to make piety and virtue become the fashion of the age, if, at the same time, he would make them necessary qualifications for favour and preferment.

It is clear, from present experience, that the bare example of the best prince will not have any mighty influence, where the age is very corrupt. For, when was there ever a better prince on the throne than the present Queen? I do not talk of her talent for government, her love of the people, or any other qualities that are purely regal; but her piety, charity, temperance, conjugal love, and whatever other virtues do best adorn a private life; wherein, without question or flattery, she hath no superior: yet, neither will it be satire or peevish invective to affirm, that infidelity and vice are not much diminished since her coming to the crown, nor will, in all probability, till some more effectual remedies be provided.

Thus human nature seems to lie under this disadvantage, that the example alone of a vicious prince, will, in time, corrupt an age; but that of a good one, will not be sufficient to reform it, without further endeavours. Princes must therefore supply this defect by a vigorous exercise of that authority, which the law has left them, by making it every man's interest and honour, to cultivate religion and virtue; by rendering vice a disgrace, and the certain ruin to preferment or pretensions: All which they should first attempt in their own courts and families. For instance; might not the Queen's domestics of the middle and lower sort, be obliged, upon penalty of suspension, or loss of their employments, to a constant weekly attendance, at least, on the service of the church; to a decent behaviour in it; to receive the Sacrament four times in the year; to avoid swearing and irreligious profane discourses; and, to the appearance, at least, of temperance and chastity? Might

not the care of all this be committed to the strict inspection of proper persons? Might not those of higher rank, and nearer access to her Majesty's person, receive her own commands to the same purpose, and be countenanced, or disfavoured, according as they obey? Might not the Queen lay her injunctions on the Bishops, and other great men of undoubted piety, to make diligent enquiry, to give her notice, if any person about her should happen to be of libertine principles or morals? Might not all those who enter upon any office in her Majesty's family, be obliged to take an oath parallel with that against simony, which is administered to the clergy? 'Tis not to be doubted, but that if these, or the like proceedings, were duly observed, morality and religion would soon become fashionable court virtues; and be taken up as the only methods to get or keep employments there; which alone would have mighty influence upon many of the nobility and principal gentry.

But, if the like methods were pursued as far as possible, with regard to those who are in the great employments of state, it is hard to conceive how general a reformation they might in time produce among us. For, if piety and virtue were once reckoned qualifications necessary to preferment; every man thus endowed, when put into great stations, would readily imitate the Queen's example, in the distribution of all offices in his disposal; especially if any apparent transgression, through favour or partiality, would be imputed to him for a misdemeanour, by which he must certainly forfeit his favour and station: And there being such great numbers in employment, scattered through every town and county in this kingdom; if all these were exemplary in the conduct of their lives, things would soon take a new face, and religion receive a mighty encouragement: Nor would the public weal be less advanced; since, of nine offices in ten that are ill executed, the defect is not in capacity or understanding, but in common honesty. I know no employment, for which piety disqualifies any man; and if it did, I doubt the objection would not be very seasonably offered at present; because, it is perhaps too just a reflection, that in the disposal of places, the question whether a person be *fit* for what he is recommended to, is generally the last that is thought on, or regarded.

I have often imagined, that something parallel to the office of censors anciently in Rome, would be of mighty use among us, and could be easily limited from running into any exorbitances. The Romans understood liberty at least as well as we, were as jealous of it, and upon every occasion as bold assertors. Yet I do not remember to have read any great complaint of the abuses in that office among them; but many admirable effects of it are left upon record. There are several pernicious vices frequent and notorious among us, that escape or elude the punishment of any law we have yet invented, or have had no law at all against them; such as atheism, drunkenness, fraud, avarice, and several others; which, by this institution, wisely regulated, might be much reformed. Suppose, for instance, that itinerary commissioners were appointed to inspect everywhere throughout the kingdom, into the conduct (at least) of men in office, with respect to their morals and religion, as well as their abilities; to receive the complaints and informations that should be offered against them, and make their report here upon oath, to the court, or the ministry, who should reward or punish accordingly. I avoid entering into the particulars of this, or any other scheme, which, coming from a private hand, might be liable to many defects, but would soon be digested by the wisdom of the nation; and surely, six thousand pounds a year would not be ill laid out among as many commissioners duly qualified, who, in three divisions, should be personally obliged to take their yearly circuits for that purpose.

But this is beside my present design, which was only to show what degree of reformation is in the power of the Queen, without the interposition of the legislature, and which her Majesty is, without question, obliged in conscience to endeavour by her authority, as much as she does by her practice.

It will be easily granted, that the example of this great town hath a mighty influence over the whole kingdom; and it is as manifest, that the town is equally influenced by the court, and the ministry, and those who, by their employments, or their hopes, depend upon them. Now, if under so excellent a princess as the present Queen, we would suppose a family strictly regulated, as I have above pro-

posed; a ministry, where every single person was of distinguished piety; if we should suppose all great offices of state and law filled after the same manner, and with such as were equally diligent in choosing persons, who, in their several subordinations, would be obliged to follow the examples of their superiors, under the penalty of loss of favour and place; will not everybody grant, that the empire of vice and irreligion would be soon destroyed in this great metropolis, and receive a terrible blow through the whole island, which hath so great an intercourse with it, and so much affects to follow its fashions?

For, if religion were once understood to be the necessary step to favour and preferment; can it be imagined that any man would openly offend against it, who had the least regard for his reputation or his fortune? There is no quality so contrary to any nature, which men cannot affect, and put on upon occasions, in order to serve an interest, or gratify a prevailing passion. The proudest man will personate humility, the morosest learn to flatter, the laziest will be sedulous and active, where he is in pursuit of what he has much at heart. How ready, therefore, would most men be to step into the paths of virtue and piety, if they infallibly led to favour and fortune!

If swearing and profaneness, scandalous and avowed lewdness, excessive gaming and intemperance, were a little discountenanced in the army, I cannot readily see what ill consequences could be apprehended; if gentlemen of that profession were at least obliged to some external decorum in their conduct; or even if a profligate life and character were not a means of advancement, and the appearance of piety a most infallible hindrance, it is impossible the corruptions there should be so universal and exorbitant. I have been assured by several great officers, that no troops abroad are so ill disciplined as the English; which cannot well be otherwise, while the common soldiers have perpetually before their eyes the vicious example of their leaders; and it is hardly possible for those to commit any crime, whereof these are not infinitely more guilty, and with less temptation.

It is commonly charged upon the gentlemen of the army, that the beastly vice of drinking to excess, hath been lately, from their example, restored among us; which for some

years before was almost dropped in England. But, whoever the introducers were, they have succeeded to a miracle; many of the young nobility and gentry are already become great proficients, and are under no manner of concern to hide their talent, but are got beyond all sense of shame or fear of reproach.

This might soon be remedied, if the Queen would think fit to declare, that no young person of quality whatsoever, who was notoriously addicted to that, or any other vice, should be capable of her favour, or even admitted into her presence, with positive command to her ministers, and others in great office, to treat them in the same manner; after which, all men, who had any regard for their reputation, or any prospect of preferment, would avoid their commerce. This would quickly make that vice so scandalous, that those who could not subdue, would at least endeavour to disguise it.

By the like methods, a stop might be put to that ruinous practice of deep gaming; and the reason why it prevails so much is, because a treatment, directly opposite in every point, is made use of to promote it; by which means, the laws enacted against this abuse are wholly eluded.

It cannot be denied, that the want of strict discipline in the universities, hath been of pernicious consequence to the youth of this nation, who are there almost left entirely to their own management, especially those among them of better quality and fortune; who, because they are not under a necessity of making learning their maintenance, are easily allowed to pass their time, and take their degrees, with little or no improvement; than which there cannot well be a greater absurdity. For, if no advancement of knowledge can be had from those places, the time there spent is at best utterly lost, because every ornamental part of education is better taught elsewhere: And as for keeping youths out of harm's way, I doubt, where so many of them are got together, at full liberty of doing what they please, it will not answer the end. But, whatever abuses, corruptions, or deviations from statutes, have crept into the universities through neglect, or length of time; they might in a great degree be reformed, by strict injunctions from court (upon each particular) to the visitors and heads of houses; besides

the peculiar authority the queen may have in several colleges, whereof her predecessors were the founders. And among other regulations, it would be very convenient to prevent the excess of drink, with that scurvy custom among the lads, and parent of the former vice, the taking of tobacco, where it is not absolutely necessary in point of health.

From the universities, the young nobility, and others of great fortunes, are sent for early up to town, for fear of contracting any airs of pedantry, by a college education. Many of the younger gentry retire to the Inns of Court, where they are wholly left to their own discretion. And the consequence of this remissness in education appears, by observing that nine in ten of those, who rise in the church or the court, the law, or the army, are younger brothers, or new men, whose narrow fortunes have forced them upon industry and application.

As for the Inns of Court, unless we suppose them to be much degenerated, they must needs be the worst instituted seminaries in any Christian country; but whether they may be corrected without interposition of the legislature, I have not skill enough to determine. However, it is certain, that all wise nations have agreed in the necessity of a strict education, which consisted, among other things, in the observance of moral duties, especially justice, temperance, and chastity, as well as the knowledge of arts, and bodily exercises: But all these among us are laughed out of doors.

Without the least intention to offend the clergy, I cannot but think, that through a mistaken notion and practice, they prevent themselves from doing much service, which otherwise might lie in their power, to religion and virtue: I mean, by affecting so much to converse with each other, and caring so little to mingle with the laity. They have their particular clubs, and particular coffee-houses, where they generally appear in clusters: A single divine dares hardly shew his person among numbers of fine gentlemen; or if he happens to fall into such company, he is silent and suspicious, in continual apprehension that some pert man of pleasure should break an unmannerly jest, and render him ridiculous. Now, I take this behaviour of the clergy to be just as reasonable, as if the physicians should agree to spend

their time in visiting one another, or their several apothecaries, and leave their patients to shift for themselves. In my humble opinion, the clergy's business lies entirely among the laity; neither is there, perhaps, a more effectual way to forward the salvation of men's souls, than for spiritual persons to make themselves as agreeble as they can, in the conversations of the world; for which a learned education gives them great advantage, if they would please to improve and apply it. It so happens that the men of pleasure, who never go to church, nor use themselves to read books of devotion, form their ideas of the clergy from a few poor strollers they often observe in the streets, or sneaking out of some person of quality's house, where they are hired by the lady at ten shillings a month; while those of better figure and parts, do seldom appear to correct these notions. And let some reasoners think what they please, 'tis certain that men must be brought to esteem and love the clergy, before they can be persuaded to be in love with religion. No man values the best medicine, if administered by a physician, whose person he hates or despises. If the clergy were as forward to appear in all companies, as other gentlemen, and would a little study the arts of conversation to make themselves agreeable, they might be welcome at every party where there was the least regard for politeness or good sense; and consequently prevent a thousand vicious or profane discourses, as well as actions; neither would men of understanding complain, that a clergyman was a constraint upon the company, because they could not speak blasphemy, or obscene jests before him. While the people are so jealous of the clergy's ambition, as to abhor all thoughts of the return of ecclesiastic discipline among them, I do not see any other method left for men of that function to take, in order to reform the world, than by using all honest arts to make themselves acceptable to the laity. This, no doubt, is part of that wisdom of the serpent, which the Author of Christianity directs, and is the very method used by St. Paul, who *became all things to all men, to the Jews a Jew, and a Greek to the Greeks.*

How to remedy these inconveniences, may be a matter of some difficulty; since the clergy seem to be of an opinion, that this humour of sequestering themselves is a part of

their duty; nay, as I remember, they have been told so by some of their bishops in their pastoral letters, particularly by one [1] among them of great merit and distinction, who yet, in his own practice, hath all his lifetime taken a course directly contrary. But I am deceived, if an awkward shame and fear of ill usage from the laity, have not a greater share in this mistaken conduct, than their own inclinations: However, if the outward profession of religion and virtue, were once in practice and countenance at court, as well as among all men in office, or who have any hopes or dependence for preferment, a good treatment of the clergy would be the necessary consequence of such a reformation; and they would soon be wise enough to see their own duty and interest in qualifying themselves for lay-conversation, when once they were out of fear of being chocqued by ribaldry or profaneness.

There is one further circumstance upon this occasion, which I know not whether it will be very orthodox to mention: The clergy are the only set of men among us, who constantly wear a distinct habit from others; the consequence of which (not in reason but in fact) is this, that as long as any scandalous persons appear in that dress, it will continue in some degree a general mark of contempt. Whoever happens to see a scoundrel in a gown, reeling home at midnight, (a sight neither frequent nor miraculous), is apt to entertain an ill idea of the whole order, and at the same time to be extremely comforted in his own vices. Some remedy might be put to this, if those straggling gentlemen, who come up to town to seek their fortunes, were fairly dismissed to the West Indies, where there is work enough, and where some better provision should be made for them, than I doubt there is at present. Or, what if no person were allowed to wear the habit, who had not some preferment in the church, or at least some temporal fortune sufficient to keep him out of contempt? Though, in my opinion, it were infinitely better, if all the clergy (except the bishops) were permitted to appear like other men of the graver sort, unless at those seasons when they are doing the business of their function.

[1] Bishop Burnet of Salisbury. See Swift's "Remarks on the Bishop of Sarum's Introduction." [T. S.]

There is one abuse in this town, which wonderfully contributes to the promotion of vice; that such men are often put into the commission of the peace, whose interest it is, that virtue should be utterly banished from among us; who maintain, or at least enrich themselves, by encouraging the grossest immoralities; to whom all the bawds of the ward pay contribution, for shelter and protection from the laws. Thus these worthy magistrates, instead of lessening enormities, are the occasion of just twice as much debauchery as there would be without them. For those infamous women are forced upon doubling their work and industry, to answer double charges, of paying the justice, and supporting themselves. Like thieves who escape the gallows, and are let out to steal, in order to discharge the gaoler's fees.

It is not to be questioned, but the Queen and ministry might easily redress this abominable grievance; by enlarging the number of justices of the peace; by endeavouring to choose men of virtuous principles; by admitting none who have not considerable fortunes; perhaps, by receiving into the number some of the most eminent clergy: Then, by forcing all of them, upon severe penalties, to act when there is occasion, and not permitting any who are offered to refuse the commission; but in these two last cases, which are very material, I doubt there will be need of the legislature.

The reformation of the stage is entirely in the power of the Queen; and in the consequences it hath upon the minds of the younger people, does very well deserve the strictest care. Besides the indecent and profane passages; besides the perpetual turning into ridicule the very function of the priesthood, with other irregularities, in most modern comedies, which have by others been objected to them; it is worth observing the distributive justice of the authors, which is constantly applied to the punishment of virtue, and the reward of vice; directly opposite to the rules of their best critics, as well as to the practice of dramatic poets, in all other ages and countries. For example, a country squire, who is represented with no other vice but that of being a clown, and having the provincial accent upon his tongue, which is neither a fault, nor in his power to remedy, must be condemned to marry a cast wench, or a cracked chambermaid. On the other side, a rakehell of the town, whose

character is set off with no other accomplishment, but excessive prodigality, profaneness, intemperance, and lust, is rewarded with a lady of great fortune to repair his own, which his vices had almost ruined. And as in a tragedy, the hero is represented to have obtained many victories in order to raise his character in the minds of the spectators; so the hero of a comedy is represented to have been victorious in all his intrigues, for the same reason. I do not remember, that our English poets ever suffered a criminal amour to succeed upon the stage, till the reign of King Charles the Second. Ever since that time, the alderman is made a cuckold, the deluded virgin is debauched, and adultery and fornication are supposed to be committed behind the scenes, as part of the action. These and many more corruptions of the theatre, peculiar to our age and nation, need continue no longer, than while the court is content to connive at or neglect them. Surely a pension would not be ill employed on some men of wit, learning, and virtue, who might have power to strike out every offensive or unbecoming passage, from plays already written, as well as those that may be offered to the stage for the future. By which, and other wise regulations, the theatre might become a very innocent and useful diversion, instead of being a scandal and reproach to our religion and country.

The proposals I have hitherto made for the advancement of religion and morality, are such as come within reach of the administration; such as a pious active prince, with a steady resolution, might soon bring to effect. Neither am I aware of any objections to be raised against what I have advanced; unless it should be thought, that making religion a necessary step to interest and favour might increase hypocrisy among us; and I readily believe it would. But if one in twenty should be brought over to true piety by this, or the like methods, and the other nineteen be only hypocrites, the advantage would still be great. Besides, hypocrisy is much more eligible than open infidelity and vice; it wears the livery of religion; it acknowledges her authority, and is cautious of giving scandal. Nay, a long continued disguise is too great a constraint upon human nature, especially an English disposition; men would leave off their vices out of mere weariness, rather than undergo the toil and hazard, and

perhaps expense, of practising them perpetually in private. And I believe it is often with religion, as it is with love; which, by much dissembling, at last grows real.

All other projects to this great end have proved hitherto ineffectual. Laws against immorality have not been executed; and proclamations occasionally issued out to enforce them are wholly unregarded as things of form. Religious societies, though begun with excellent intention, and by persons of true piety,[1] have dwindled into factious clubs, and grown a trade to enrich little knavish informers of the meanest rank, such as common constables, and broken shopkeepers.

And that some effectual attempt should be made toward such a reformation, is perhaps more necessary than people commonly apprehend; because the ruin of a state is generally preceded by a universal degeneracy of manners, and contempt of religion; which is entirely our case at present.

"Dis te minorem quod geris imperas."—HOR.[2]

Neither is this a matter to be deferred till a more convenient time of peace and leisure: Because a reformation in men's faith and morals is the best natural, as well as religious means, to bring the war to a good conclusion. For, if men in trust performed their duty for conscience sake, affairs would not suffer through fraud, falsehood, and neglect, as they now perpetually do. And if they believed a God, and his Providence, and acted accordingly, they might reasonably hope for his divine assistance, in so just a cause as ours.

Nor could the majesty of the English Crown appear, upon any occasion, in a greater lustre, either to foreigners or subjects, than by an administration, which, producing such great effects, would discover so much power. And power being the natural appetite of princes, a limited monarch cannot so well gratify it in anything, as a strict execution of the laws.

Besides; all parties would be obliged to close with so good a work as this, for their own reputation: Neither is any expedient more likely to unite them. For the most

[1] The original edition omits here the words, "are said, I know not whether truly or not." All other editions give these words. [T. S.]

[2] "Carmina," iii. 6. 5.

violent party men, I have ever observed, are such, as in the conduct of their lives have discovered least sense of religion or morality; and when all such are laid aside, at least those among them as shall be found incorrigible, it will be a matter perhaps of no great difficulty to reconcile the rest.

The many corruptions at present in every branch of business are almost inconceivable. I have heard it computed by skilful persons, that of six millions raised every year for the service of the public, one third, at least, is sunk and intercepted through the several classes and subordinations of artful men in office, before the remainder is applied to the proper use. This is an accidental ill effect of our freedom. And while such men are in trust, who have no check from within, nor any views but toward their interest, there is no other fence against them, but the certainty of being hanged upon the first discovery, by the arbitrary will of an unlimited monarch, or his vizier. Among us, the only danger to be apprehended is the loss of an employment; and that danger is to be eluded a thousand ways. Besides, when fraud is great, it furnishes weapons to defend itself: And at worst, if the crimes be so flagrant, that a man is laid aside out of perfect shame, (which rarely happens) he retires loaded with the spoils of the nation; *et fruitur diis iratis.* I could name a commission, where several persons, out of a salary of five hundred pounds, without other visible revenues, have always lived at the rate of two thousand, and laid out forty or fifty thousand upon purchases of lands or annuities. A hundred other instances of the same kind might easily be produced. What remedy, therefore, can be found against such grievances, in a constitution like ours, but to bring religion into countenance, and encourage those, who, from the hope of future reward, and dread of future punishment, will be moved to act with justice and integrity?

This is not to be accomplished any other way, but by introducing religion, as much as possible, to be the turn and fashion of the age; which only lies in the power of the administration; the prince with utmost strictness regulating the court, the ministry, and other persons in great employment; and these, by their example and authority, reforming all who have dependence on them.

It is certain, that a reformation successfully carried on in

this great town, would in time spread itself over the whole kingdom; since most of the considerable youth pass here that season of their lives, wherein the strongest impressions are made, in order to improve their education, or advance their fortune; and those among them, who return into their several counties, are sure to be followed and imitated, as the greatest patterns of wit and good breeding.

And if things were once in this train, that is, if virtue and religion were established as the necessary titles to reputation and preferment; and if vice and infidelity were not only loaded with infamy, but made the infallible ruin of all men's pretensions; our duty, by becoming our interest, would take root in our natures, and mix with the very genius of our people; so that it would not be easy for the example of one wicked prince to bring us back to our former corruptions.

I have confined myself (as it is before observed) to those methods for the advancement of piety, which are in the power of a prince, limited like ours, by a strict execution of the laws already in force. And this is enough for a project, that comes without any name or recommendation; I doubt, a great deal more than will suddenly be reduced into practice. Though, if any disposition should appear towards so good a work, it is certain, that the assistance of the legislative power would be necessary to make it more complete. I will instance only a few particulars.

In order to reform the vices of this town, which, as we have said, hath so mighty an influence on the whole kingdom, it would be very instrumental to have a law made, that all taverns and alehouses should be obliged to dismiss their company at twelve at night, and shut up their doors; and that no woman should be suffered to enter any tavern or alehouse, upon any pretence whatsoever. It is easy to conceive what a number of ill consequences such a law would prevent; the mischiefs of quarrels, and lewdness, and thefts, and midnight brawls, the diseases of intemperance and venery, and a thousand other evils needless to mention. Nor would it be amiss, if the masters of those public-houses were obliged, upon the severest penalties, to give only a proportioned quantity of drink to every company; and when he found his guests disordered with excess, to refuse them any more.

I believe there is hardly a nation in Christendom, where all kind of fraud is practised in so unmeasurable a degree as with us. The lawyer, the tradesman, the mechanic, have found so many arts to deceive in their several callings, that they far outgrow the common prudence of mankind, which is in no sort able to fence against them. Neither could the legislature in anything more consult the public good, than by providing some effectual remedy against this evil, which, in several cases, deserves greater punishment than many crimes that are capital among us. The vintner, who, by mixing poison with his wines, destroys more lives than any one disease in the bill of mortality; the lawyer, who persuades you to a purchase which he knows is mortgaged for more than the worth, to the ruin of you and your family; the goldsmith or scrivener, who takes all your fortune to dispose of, when he has beforehand resolved to break the following day, do surely deserve the gallows much better than the wretch who is carried thither for stealing a horse.

It cannot easily be answered to God or man, why a law is not made for limiting the press; at least so far as to prevent the publishing of such pernicious books, as, under pretence of freethinking, endeavour to overthrow those tenets in religion which have been held inviolable, almost in all ages, by every sect that pretend to be Christian; and cannot, therefore, with any colour of reason, be called points in controversy, or matters of speculation, as some would pretend. The Doctrine of the Trinity, the Divinity of Christ, the Immortality of the Soul, and even the truth of all revelation, are daily exploded and denied in books openly printed; though it is to be supposed neither party will avow such principles, or own the supporting of them to be any way necessary to their service.[1]

It would be endless to set down every corruption or defect which requires a remedy from the legislative power. Senates are like to have little regard for any proposals that come from without doors; though, under a due sense of my own inabilities, I am fully convinced, that the unbiassed thoughts of an honest and wise man, employed on the good of his country, may be better digested than the results of a

[1] This passage refers to the deistical publications of Asgill, Toland, Tindal, and Collins, already noted. [T. S.]

multitude, where faction and interest too often prevail; as a single guide may direct the way better than five hundred, who have *contrary views*, or *look asquint*, or *shut their eyes*.

I shall therefore mention but one more particular, which I think the Parliament ought to take under consideration; whether it be not a shame to our country, and a scandal to Christianity, that in many towns, where there is a prodigious increase in the number of houses and inhabitants, so little care should be taken for the building of churches, that five parts in six of the people are absolutely hindered from hearing divine service? Particularly here in London, where a single minister, with one or two sorry curates, hath the care sometimes of above twenty thousand souls incumbent on him. A neglect of religion so ignominious, in my opinion, that it can hardly be equalled in any civilized age or country.[1]

But, to leave these airy imaginations of introducing new laws for the amendment of mankind; what I principally insist on is, a due execution of the old, which lies wholly in the crown, and in the authority derived from thence. I return, therefore, to my former assertion; that if stations of power, trust, profit, and honour, were constantly made the rewards of virtue and piety, such an administration must needs have a mighty influence on the faith and morals of the whole kingdom: And men of great abilities would then endeavour to excel in the duties of a religious life, in order to qualify themselves for public service. I may possibly be wrong in some of the means I prescribe towards this end; but that is no material objection against the design itself. Let those who are at the helm contrive it better, which, perhaps, they may easily do. Everybody will agree that the disease is manifest, as well as dangerous; that some remedy is necessary, and that none yet applied hath been effectual, which is a sufficient excuse for any man who wishes well to his country, to offer his thoughts, when he can have no other end in view but the public good. The present Queen is a princess of as many and great virtues as ever filled a

[1] This paragraph is known to have given the first hint to certain bishops, particularly to Bishop Atterbury, to procure a fund for building fifty new churches in London. [T. S.]

throne: How would it brighten her character to the present and after ages, if she would exert her utmost authority to instil some share of those virtues into her people, which they are too degenerate to learn only from her example! And, be it spoke with all the veneration possible for so excellent a sovereign, her best endeavours in this weighty affair are a most important part of her duty, as well as of her interest and her honour.

But, it must be confessed, that as things are now, every man thinks that he has laid in a sufficient stock of merit, and may pretend to any employment, provided he has been loud and frequent in declaring himself hearty for the government. 'Tis true, he is a man of pleasure, and a freethinker, that is, in other words, he is profligate in his morals, and a despiser of religion; but in point of party, he is one to be confided in; he is an assertor of liberty and property; he rattles it out against Popery and Arbitrary Power, and Priestcraft and High Church. 'Tis enough: He is a person fully qualified for any employment, in the court or the navy, the law or the revenue; where he will be sure to leave no arts untried, of bribery, fraud, injustice, oppression, that he can practise with any hope of impunity. No wonder such men are true to a government where liberty runs high, where property, however attained, is so well secured, and where the administration is at least so gentle: 'Tis impossible they could choose any other constitution, without changing to their loss.

Fidelity to a present establishment is indeed the principal means to defend it from a foreign enemy, but without other qualifications, will not prevent corruptions from within; and states are more often ruined by these than the other.

To conclude. Whether the proposals I have offered toward a reformation, be such as are most prudent and convenient, may probably be a question; but it is none at all, whether some reformation be absolutely necessary; because the nature of things is such, that if abuses be not remedied, they will certainly increase, nor ever stop, till they end in the subversion of a commonwealth. As there must always of necessity be some corruptions, so, in a well-instituted state, the executive power will be always contending against them, by *reducing things* (as Michiaevel speaks) *to their first*

principles ; never letting abuses grow inveterate, or multiply so far, that it will be hard to find remedies, and perhaps impossible to apply them. As he that would keep his house in repair, must attend every little breach or flaw, and supply it immediately ; else time alone will bring all to ruin ; how much more the common accidents of storms and rain ? He must live in perpetual danger of his house falling about his ears ; and will find it cheaper to throw it quite down, and build it again from the ground, perhaps upon a new foundation, or at least in a new form, which may neither be so safe, nor so convenient, as the old.

XXIV ·

Intactis opulentior

You who are richer than
The unplundered treasure-chests of the Arabian
Sheikhs and the rajah kings,
Who build up all the land and thrust your scaffoldings
Into the public sea,
Beware! Once on your gable grim Necessity
Her adamant nails has set,
Soul shall feel terror, flesh shall not escape death's net.
The Scythians of the plains,
People whose wandering houses travel upon wains,
Live better, and the tough
Getae whose unmarked acres furnish food enough
For common need: their men
Each labour on the land for a year only, then
By equal rote another's
Willing to take his turn; no merciless stepmothers
Harry poor orphans there,
No wives govern by dowry or lean on debonair
Young lovers. Family pride
Is their rich dower, chastity shy to glance aside,
Faith in the marriage tie;
Sin is abhorred; the price of scandal is to die.
He who would cleanse the State
Of bloodshed and the civil fury the gods hate
And be on statues styled

"Father of Cities," let him be brave, bridle our wild
Licence and stake his fame
With the next generation: we, to our deep shame,
Envy and hate the sight
Of virtue (though we're quick to mourn its vanished light).
Why raise these tragic sighs
When evil, still unpruned by punishment, multiplies?
What are our vain laws worth
Without morality, now that no place on earth
—Not even the tropic belt
Or the borders of the Pole where the snows never melt—
Bars traders, and no sea
Heaves that can foil our seamen's ingenuity?
Since to be poor's a great
Dishonour now, poverty bids men tolerate
Anything, dare all crimes,
And turns aside from the steep path that Virtue climbs.
To the Capitol let us bring
Our jewels, our gauds, our gold (that useless, deadly thing,
The matter and the cause
Of our great ill) and thereby win all Rome's applause,
Or, if we'd truly be
Repentant, toss our treasures in the nearest sea.
We must pull up by the root
The first sick growth of greed, and that too delicate shoot,
The mind, must be made stern
By harsher disciplines. No freeborn boy will learn
To sit a horse these days.
Hunting scares him; master of frivolous arts, he plays
Greek hoops,[1] or, if you'd rather,

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[1] The theme of the vicious, effeminate Greek constantly recurs in Roman literature.

Rolls dice against the law: no wonder, for his father
    Breaks promises, mis-spends
His business partner's capital, hoodwinks his friends
    And busily puts by
Money for an unworthy heir. One can't deny
    He makes his vile wealth breed;
Yet, never quite content, he feels a nameless need.